

# Brody Stevens, Comic Who Explored His Darker Side, Dies at 48

The comedian Brody Stevens performing in Miami Beach in 2013. His stand-up style was a mix of confrontation and self-deprecation. Mitchell Zachs, via Associated Press

By **Neil Genzlinger**

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Brody Stevens, a jarring comic who turned his own struggles with depression into a Comedy Central television series, died on Friday at his home in Los Angeles. He was 48.

The Los Angeles County medical examiner-coroner's office ruled the death a suicide.

Mr. Stevens was well known in the stand-up world, especially on the West Coast, as well as to studio audiences of shows like "Chelsea Lately" and "The Burn With Jeff Ross." For those shows he was the warm-up comedian, whose job was to get the audience in a laughing mood before taping began.

[His stand-up style](#) was a seemingly contradictory mix of confrontation and self-deprecation. He would often mock the fact that he was not a household name and had managed to land only small parts in television shows and movies.

"I was in the 'Hangovers,'" he joked in a favorite routine. "'Hangover 1': In it. 'Hangover 2': In it. 'Due Date': In it. 'Funny People': I got cut out of that."

Onstage he raced quickly through a wide array of subject matter, going deeper and darker than comfort-food comedians. When his audiences responded with nervous half-laughs or silence, he would turn on them with something on the edge of genuine hostility.

"You should be giving me laughs based on cadence alone" was one of his favorite lines for berating a crowd. "I scratch your back, you shave mine."

He was widely admired by other comedians for his willingness to venture into unsafe territory.

"Brody never seems like he's doing material at all," Sarah Silverman once said. "He's just yelling."

She gave that assessment in the premiere episode of "Brody Stevens: Enjoy It!," a biographical documentary series (based on an earlier HBO web series) broadcast on Comedy Central in 2013 and 2014. Among the things it examined was a disturbing period in which Mr. Stevens stopped taking his anti-anxiety medications and went on a days-long sleep-deprived rant, much of it blasted in a stream of Twitter messages and videos. The behavior so alarmed his friends — especially when he tweeted that he had a gun — that they called the authorities,

and Mr. Stevens was committed for psychiatric treatment.

“They diagnosed me here at the U.C.L.A. psych ward with a bipolar disorder,” he said in Episode 2 of “Enjoy It!”

“I don’t want it to make who I am,” he added, “ ‘I’m the guy who had this breakdown.’ But I’ll talk about it, and be real, learn from it, help others learn from it, and then move on.”

Mr. Stevens was born Steven James Brody to Harold and Jackie Brody on May 22, 1970, in California’s San Fernando Valley. His parents divorced when he was young.

He played baseball at Reseda High School and received a scholarship to Arizona State University, where he was a pitcher. His love of baseball continued past his playing days, and he was a frequent visitor to spring training camps.

He honed his stand-up skills in Seattle, where he also had a public-access TV show, then returned to the Los Angeles area. The actor and producer Zach Galifianakis became a close friend and, with Mike Gibbons, created “Enjoy It!,” which ran for 12 episodes. Another theme of that show was Mr. Stevens’s strained relationship with his sister, Stephanie.

Information on his survivors was not immediately available.

Mr. Stevens, who in recent years went by the name Steven Brody Stevens, also hosted audio and video podcasts. On Twitter, the comedian John Roy recalled an industry show in which a number of comics performed for hard-to-amuse agents. The crowd, he said, was comatose until Mr. Stevens took the stage and virtually demanded laughs, finally loosening things up.

“He gave that gift to every comic that came after him that night,” Mr. Roy wrote. “That’s why he was such a master at warming up TV shows. He simply refused to accept that audiences could not be made to laugh, and he threw every thought and instinct he had at that problem until it was solved.”

If you are having thoughts of suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) or go to [SpeakingOfSuicide.com/resources](https://www.speakingofsuicide.com/resources) for a list of additional resources.



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